

## June 01, 2002- Rep. Sanchez Delivers Commencement Address at CSU, Fullerton

June 1, 2002 REP. SANCHEZ DELIVERS COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT CSU, FULLERTON  
TO LARGEST GRADUATING CLASS EVER

"President Gordon; the California State University Board of Trustees; distinguished faculty and alumni; and especially the Cal State Fullerton Class of 2002; it is an honor to be here to share this special morning with you, your loving families and friends for this historic day in Cal State history. The next two days will represent the school's largest commencement weekend ever!

"I have a strong love of this university, since it graduated my brother, Iggy, and my mom, Maria. This morning as I left my house, my brother and sister-in-law asked me what advice I would give you. I asked them what advice they thought I should give. My brother said, 'Tell them not to get the IRS mad! And tell them that owning your own business is the great American way.'

"My sister-in-law said, 'Tell them to pay their student loans and tell them to stay out of debt!'

"My mother said, 'Let them know that when they have made it they need to help those coming behind them.'

"And, . . .you made it! This is what you spent four years working toward-and maybe some of you a little longer? As a freshman, you probably couldn't picture today too clearly. But today you will celebrate a finish, and also a beginning.

"Four years ago, I too, was a freshman-but I was a freshman on Capitol Hill. I wanted to change the world. Some people thought I was crazy to run for Congress in the first place, but they REALLY couldn't understand why I would want to head to Washington, well, . . . to fight!

"What they didn't know is that I've been fighting my whole life. I have six brothers and sisters! If that couldn't prepare me for Capitol Hill, nothing could.

"Winning my election made me the first Hispanic and the first woman to represent Orange County in the House of Representatives.

"And they were not ready for me. Imagine, on the day I was sworn in, they obviously had not anticipated such a large family coming to see me. I needed 14 tickets. They gave me one. When I asked the Sergeant at Arms how to get more tickets, he told me the only other tickets were with the other representatives.

"Even though I didn't know any of them, I decided to call the longest serving members of the House, asking them for their tickets. One guy said to me, 'Don't you know I'm a Republican?' I told him my dad was a Republican and I would give the ticket to him. He laughed and he gave me his ticket. And on my 37th birthday, when I was sworn in as a representative, all 14 of my family members were in that chamber.

"What I realized about Washington, was even though there are people there that I may disagree with, some I even STRONGLY disagree with, I realized that we all had one very important thing in common. We were all there to make this country a better and stronger place.

"And after nearly three complete terms, I'm still there. Because the truth is, there's nothing better than being around people with passion and commitment.

"And today, as I look out at all of you, I can see the hope and excitement I remember in myself when I was heading off on my first trip to Capitol Hill. I am given renewed inspiration for the future. And I look to you to find your passion. Find it and use it to make your own change in the world.

"In your years at Cal State Fullerton, you have compiled a distinctive record of achievement that has prepared you to face our evolving world. And today I am so happy to accompany you as you are rewarded for your accomplishments. You are ready to make tangible improvements in our community and our world. Your potential is only as limited as you allow it to be.

"You make this transition at an auspicious time. 'Each moment in history is a fleeting time, precious and unique. But some stand out as moments of beginning, in which courses are set that shape decades or centuries.'

"I believe that this is such a moment of beginning, and that the choices you make will make a difference and shape our world for many years.

"The convergence of the global economy, Internet expansion, international mobility, and a post 9/11 consciousness,

make this a time of extraordinary anxiety, but also one of incredible opportunity.

"As we receive daily news warnings to be alert and protect one another, I challenge you to reinvent the spirit of community. Meet your neighbors. Take this time to identify what you can do in your own community to make it stronger and more united. If each of us embraces a corner of change and community, if each of us uses our passion to make a difference, we can weave a fabric of strength and unity that stretches over our entire nation.

"For those of you searching for a direction after this great accomplishment, I have a few ideas for you. Look into Americorps. Join the Peace Corps. Teach for America. Volunteer.

"It is critical that we use this time of transition to reinforce those values that make America the greatest country in the world. And I ask you to use your own values as a platform from which you launch yourself in new directions. Because VALUES are constant. It's attitudes and strategies that shift to reflect a changing world.

"And now, students of this wonderful institution, . . . one that is now the fastest growing campus in the Cal State system. . . I charge you with the responsibility of seeking out your passions. Make your mark. Find your piece of the world fabric.

"Be open to the new, the exotic, even, frankly, to the irrational. Be quick to learn, slow to judge, and ready to conduct yourselves with an eye to long-term relationships.

"And for those of you that are looking at careers in public service, I applaud you. We need more women in Congress, we need young people in Congress. I look forward to your help in shaping our policies and institutions to reflect the realities of our new world.

"It is going to be a long, tough road. Mastering complexity is never easy. It's going to take patience. And you will find yourself frustrated and, sometimes angry, just as I do on occasion on the floor of the House of Representatives. But there IS an upside. . . the wait for a parking space will be MUCH shorter!!

"As you leave here today, I ask you to continue to embrace your values-those of your family and those you have learned here;

"If you love learning and discovery;

"If you respect reverence, honesty and individual achievement.

"Then you will have an opportunity to embrace the world in a way no generation ever has.

"To the College of the Arts, go make the world more beautiful.

"To the College of Communications, teach nations how to talk to one another.

"To the College of Engineering and Computer Science, continue to expand our horizons and shrink barriers.

"To the College of Human Development and Community Service, remind mankind how to love and nurture.

"To the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, postulate a greater future for our children.

"Some of you may have read in the paper today that two days ago I was in Cuba. That country has a literacy rate of 97 percent. All education is free. Here were a people who could read, write and construct thoughts and ideas so well. And yet, because of their repression, they are cut off from the Internet, they have no voice in the press, they are jailed for speaking out against current conditions and in most cases they cannot leave their country.

"I began to think what good is their education, if they are not allowed to communicate with the rest of the world? Today, if this institution and this faculty have done their jobs well, you will graduate able to read, write, and construct thoughts and ideas. But if you fail to use these skills you have honed, you might as well be on an island, cutoff from discussion and interaction.

"This is your time and I have confidence that you can make the most of it. I need you to do that. Your country needs you to do that.

"Congratulations Class of 2002!"